original version of 'The Peacock "At Home"'

begin with the following lines, which C. S. Smith
quotes imperfectly:—

The Butterfly’s Ball, and the Grasshopper’s Feasts,
Excited the spleen of the Birds and the Beasts:
For their mirth and good cheer—of the Bee was the theme,
And the Gnat blew his horn, as he danc’d in the beam.

In 1809 "The Peacock at Home[sic], and Other
Poems. By Mrs. Dorset," was republished as
"Printed for John Murray, 32 Fleet Street; J.
Harris, St. Paul’s Church-Yard; and Manners &
Miller, Edinburgh." This was one of the earlier
ventures of the great house which now irradiates
Albemarle Street.

In her preface to this reissue Mrs. Dorset tells
us that the success of 'The Peacock "At Home"'
in its juvenile form induced her to republish it
"in one more worthy of those who have expressed
a desire to see it transplanted from the nursery to
more honourable station." Her intention was vain;
she turned a fresh and spontaneous text into
swaddle of this sort:—

When the Butterfly burst from her chrysalis state,
And gave to the Insects a Ball and a Fête;
When the Grasshopper’s minstrelsy charmed every ear,
And delighted the guests with his mirth and good cheer;
The fame spread abroad of their revels and feasts,
And excited the spleen of the birds and the Beasts, &c.

In short, the poor woman "edited" her own
text with a vengeance; she passed the editorial flat
iron over it, deprived it of nearly all its life, light,
and colour, and added notes to it, of which the
following may, by the indulgent reader, be taken
as specimens:—

"1. 1. 9. The House Cricket a well-known insect, in-
habiting the chimneys of farm-houses and cottages.

"2. 1. 39. The Ostrich (Struthio) whose power of
digestion is so strong, that it is said to devour iron,
stones, and other hard substances."

Shade of Sir Thomas Browne! Think of this
announcement anent the digestion of "Struthio"
being printed more than a century and a half after
thy 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica' shed incomparable
light upon the matter, and assured us that ostriches
do not devour nor "digest" iron, stones, or other hard
substances.

The "old lady" who is a friend of C. S. Smith
may find comfort in the fact that in 1883 Messrs.
Griffith & Farran, the legitimate successors of
Newberry and Harris, republished, with all their
cuts and otherwise in facsimile, 'The Butterfly’s
Ball,' 'The Peacock "At Home,"' 'The Elephant’s
Ball,' and 'The Lion's Masquerade' at one shilling
per copy. If Mr. C. S. Smith's friend is unable to procure 'The
Peacock "At Home,"' I shall be happy to lend her
my copy.

C. W. Penny.

Wokingham.

I possess a copy of this poem, very prettily
illustrated and illuminated" by the "grand-
nieces" of the authoress, Mrs. Dorset. This
dition was published by the late Joseph Cundall,
Old Bond Street, in 1849, and he presented
me with a copy of the book in the following year.
I am unable to say if it is still in print.

HENRIETTA COLE.

"THREE FARTHINGS OF LAND" (8th S. vi.
309, 390).—The various interesting quotations
given by your correspondents abundantly prove
that ancient (so-called) land measurements were
very indefinite quantities. A short study of
Domesday will show that any attempt to fix the
acreage of land expressed by a hide is absurd, for
the reason that pasture and woods were not
reckoned, and the arable land was considered not
according to area, but fertility, taking situation and
other circumstances into account. For example, in
this county, in the Hundred of Cutcombe and Mine-
head, the hide was no less than 1,878 acres, while
in that of Yeovil it was only 136½ acres. Eyton
('Domesday Studies: Somerset,' pp. 27, 28) settles
what was a farthing of land. "This was the
fertine. It was one-fourth of the virgate."

Kemble ('Saxons,' i. pp. 489, 489) says that the
fartin, fering, or farthing are all the same, viz.,